

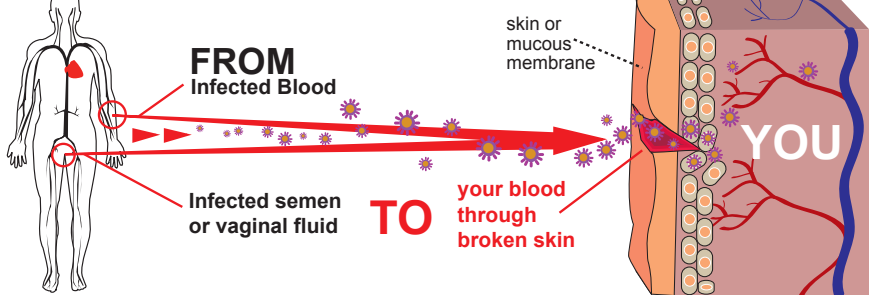
What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. Most people with this infection have **no symptoms**. There are several types of liver disease caused by different viruses, including Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and others. There is **no vaccine** for Hepatitis C, however if you are infected with Hepatitis C, you should be vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B. You should also consider being tested for HIV.

Remember: viruses spread wherever and whenever they can. Sex and sharing needles can spread virus, but these activities do not cause Hepatitis C. A virus causes Hepatitis C.

How is it spread?

Hepatitis C spreads when infected blood, semen [cum] or vaginal fluid [pussy juice] gets into your blood, through a break in your skin or mucosa (thin, wet skin inside mouth, vagina [pussy] or rectum [inside ass]). Remember, skin or mucosa can have tiny cuts or scrapes that you can't see or feel.



These are the ways that Hepatitis C may be spread:

- by sharing equipment for injecting drugs (spoons, needles, syringes, water, filters) is the most common way to spread Hepatitis C.
- by sharing straws for snorting drugs or stems and pipes for smoking crack.
- by unprotected anal or vaginal sex [screwing or being screwed in the ass or pussy without a condom], but this is rare. Having another sexually transmitted infection (STI), like chlamydia, gonorrhea or herpes may make it easier to get Hepatitis C through unprotected sex.
- by sharing needles for tattoos or piercing, unless sterilized.
- by sharing of toothbrushes or razors with household members (there may be traces of blood).

Can it be prevented?

Yes. Prevention means **reducing your risk** of getting Hepatitis C. You can avoid coming into contact with these viruses by:

- always using your own needles and drug injection equipment only, unless sterilized.
- always using needles for tattooing or piercing that have not been used on anyone else, unless sterilized.
- always using your own razor or toothbrush.
- using condoms during anal or vaginal sex [screwing or being screwed in the ass or pussy].

SAFER
NEEDLE
USE

OVER

What are its symptoms?

Most people with Hepatitis C never show symptoms. This is what **may** happen to you:

- Feeling tired and sick, having no energy.
- Not feeling like eating, throwing up, losing weight.
- Pain under the rib cage on your right side.
- Urine [pee] becomes dark-coloured and your stool [shit] becomes light-coloured.

Can it be cured?

Sometimes. In 10-15% of individuals with Hepatitis C, the virus goes away by itself, however most become carriers of the virus. This means they can pass the virus on for their whole lives and are at high risk for serious liver damage that can lead to death.

New anti-viral treatments may cure Hepatitis C, but they don't work for everyone, take months to complete and have serious side effects.

It is better to consult your physician for treatment options. Eating well will help keep your liver healthy. Alcohol use should be avoided completely.

WHAT
DOES THE
LIVER DO?

OVER

How can I tell if I am infected?

Hepatitis C is diagnosed by a blood test. You might consider getting tested for Hepatitis C if you have:

- shared equipment for taking drugs,
- shared needles for tattooing or piercing,
- had symptoms of hepatitis,
- been told that you have been exposed to Hepatitis C,
- had unprotected anal or vaginal sex,
- received blood or blood products before 1990.

WHAT IS
PUBLIC
HEALTH
FOR?

OVER

Living with Hepatitis C

Because it can be a **life-long infection**, people with Hepatitis C may experience strong emotional stress, loneliness and depression. People may be afraid of spreading the virus to their partners and household contacts, or fear rejection if they tell their partners they are infected with Hepatitis C. Good education and counselling is important so individuals can learn how to stay healthy and to prevent spreading the virus to others.

It is important that people infected with Hepatitis C get vaccinated against Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. These infections can be much more severe in those who already have Hepatitis C.

What about HIV?

Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B and HIV are all spread in the same way. If you have one, you could have others. HIV is mostly spread through sharing drug injection equipment and unprotected anal or vaginal sex. If you test positive for Hepatitis B or C, you should get tested for HIV.

Where can I go?

Street Connections - 705 Broadway - cell phone 981-0742

Mobile needle exchange van operates MON.-FRI. from 5.30-11.30 pm.

Home visits can be arranged.

You can get tested for STIs, HIV and hepatitis or get free condoms at one of these drop-in teen clinics:

Klinic - 870 Portage - 784-4090

Every MON. from 4:30-8pm, except long weekends (20 and under only).

Website: www.klinic.mb.ca email: klinic@klinic.mb.ca

Women's Health Clinic - 419 Graham - 947-1517

Every THURS. from 3:30-8pm (19 and under only, boys welcome!).

Website: www.womenshealthclinic.org

Nor'West Coop - 103-61 Tyndall - 940-2020

Every WED. from 4-5:30pm, (19 and under only).

Website: www.norwesthealth.ca email: info@norwesthealth.ca

Mount Carmel Clinic - 886 Main - 582-2311

Every SAT. from 12-4 pm, except long weekends (19 and under only).

Website: www.mountcarmel.ca

Nine Circles Clinic - 705 Broadway - 940-6001

Every WED. from 1-7 pm (No age limit). Website: www.ninecircles.ca

There are several other teen clinics available on a drop-in basis or by appointment, both inside and outside Winnipeg. Go to www.serc.mb.ca/SERC/GE/WA for a complete listing of locations and times.

DRUGS

Safer Needle Use

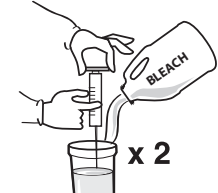
Use your own needle, spoon, water and filter for every shot.

If you do re-use any equipment, it is important to clean it with bleach (see diagram).

This method should kill HIV, but probably won't kill Hepatitis B or C. To avoid these infections, follow steps 1 and 2, then take apart your rig completely and soak in bleach for 3 to 10 minutes. Follow by steps 5 and 6.



1-2, Draw cold water into syringe, Shake syringe for 30 seconds, Do this twice, using new water.



3-4, Draw pure bleach into syringe, Shake syringe for 30 seconds, do this twice, using new bleach

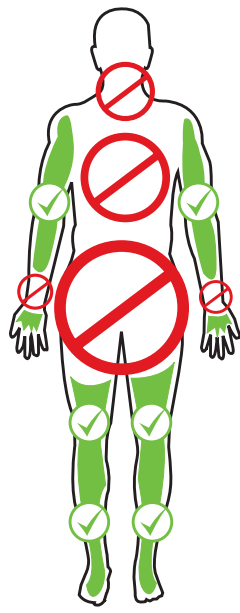


5-6, Draw cold water into syringe, Shake syringe for 30 seconds, Do this twice, using new water.

Remember: cleaning with bleach is **not** as safe as using your own needle and equipment every time.

Many people experience serious skin, blood, heart and lung problems from injecting. This is because of dirt or bacteria injected beneath the skin or into the blood. Avoid problems by **washing** hands, **sterilizing** equipment and **cleaning** skin where you inject with an alcohol swab.

- The **safest places** to inject are veins in arms, hands, legs and feet.
- Do not inject into **danger zones** such as wrists, head, neck, breasts or groin, including the genitals.
- Make sure you are in a vein by flagging [pulling a little blood into the syringe] before you shoot.
- Switch injection sites regularly to allow veins to heal and avoid clotting.
- Give your veins a holiday once in a while! Smoke, snort or eat your drugs instead.



Drug Injection Danger Signals

If you shoot up and have any of these symptoms, seek medical help right away. **Ignoring them might be fatal!**



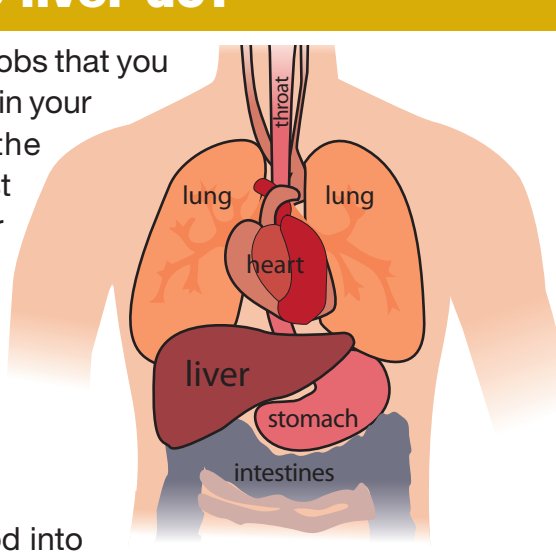
Don't wait! Get medical help!

- Fever, chills, dizziness
- Ringing in the ears
- Spots before the eyes
- Red line streaking away from an injection site
- headaches, vomiting
- difficulty breathing

What does the liver do?

Your liver does over 500 jobs that you need to live. All the blood in your body passes through the liver on the way to the rest of your body. If your liver is damaged you will get sick. If it stops working, you will die. Your liver:

- Uses protein from food to build muscles and hormones.
- Turns sugar from food into energy for your body.
- Stores and makes essential vitamins.
- Filters out harmful chemicals and changes poisons (like alcohol) so they are less likely to hurt you.



The liver can be damaged by many infections or chemicals. This can lead to liver inflammation, hepatitis, scarring, or liver failure. Drugs prescribed by doctors or bought over the counter (Tylenol, for example) or even certain herbs and natural remedies can damage the liver as much as illegal drugs or alcohol, especially if you are already infected with Hepatitis A, B or C.

What is "Public Health" for?

The main job of public health is the prevention of illness. If you test positive for Hepatitis B or C, it is important that sex partners, drug-using partners or household contacts who might get these infections from you be informed and tested. This is done to:

prevent complications from these infections and to reduce the spread of these infections.

You will be encouraged to tell your partners yourself. If you cannot, a public health nurse will tell them for you. This is confidential. **Your name will never be mentioned.**

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Sex & Prevention

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PLEASE COPY AND USE

This pamphlet series was produced as part of the Youth & STD/HIV Prevention Project at Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC), in collaboration with Kali Shiva AIDS Services. The original writing and design of this pamphlet series involved over 300 youth and 60 service providers. Ongoing funding for development and printing provided by the Winnipeg Foundation, Public Health Agency of Canada (AIDS Community Action Program), and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. 1st print: 1998. 2nd print: 2000. 3rd print: 2001. 4th print: 2002. 5th print: 2004. 6th print: 2006.

Call SERC at (204) 982-7800 for copies or for more info.

Questions Anyone?

Phone:

Public Health STI Line:
940-2200
Health Links (Winnipeg):
788-8200
Outside Winnipeg:
1-888-315-9257

Web:

www.serc.mb.ca
Or send your question to
thefactsoflife@serc.mb.ca
Your question will be answered confidentially within 2 working days.